

also thank Hannah Katch from Senator FRANKEN's staff, Rohini Kosoglu from Senator BENNET's staff, Jennifer Boyer from Senator ROBERTS staff, and Anna Abram and Margaret Coulter from Senator BURR's staff. I know that they have developed close working relationships with my staff throughout this process, and I am sincerely grateful for your dedicated efforts.

I also thank my own staff on the HELP Committee, who have spent many a night and weekend with Senator ALEXANDER's staff, other member offices, and our colleagues in the House working to come to consensus on the critical policy issues in this legislation. I thank Pam Smith, Jenelle Krishnamoorthy, Elizabeth Jungman, Nathan Brown, Emily Schlichting, Allison Preiss, Kate Frischmann, Abraham White, Jim Whitmire, Chung Shek, Frank Zhang and Evan Griffis.

We would be remiss if we did not also thank the Congressional Budget Office for their knowledgeable and capable team that dedicated many hours to estimating the budgetary effects of this legislation. Finally, we owe an enormous debt of gratitude to the staff members in the Legislative Counsel's Office—specifically Kim Tamber, Stacy Kern-Sheerer, and Bill Baird. They, too, worked long hours, nights, and weekends to assist my staff in drafting this legislation and working out technical issues.

This bill's final passage is a victory for the millions of Americans who need safe medicines—a victory that would not have been possible without the dedicated work of our Senate family. I thank you all for your extraordinary public service.

#### WELCOMING BACK SENATOR INHOFE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I see our friend here who has returned from his surgery and the death of his son, if he wishes to say something before I complete my remarks.

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, the majority leader should go ahead. My remarks will be longer.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, through the Chair to the senior Senator from Oklahoma, we are glad to have him back. We all empathize with something only a parent can understand. I am grateful to him for the example he sets for all of us.

#### SCHEDULE

Mr. President, we are going to be in a period of morning business until 5 o'clock today. Following morning business, the Senate will proceed to executive session to consider the nomination of Robert Wilkins to be U.S. Circuit judge for the DC Circuit. At 5:30, there will be up to two rollcall votes, including cloture on the Wilkins nomination. If cloture is not invoked, there will be a second cloture vote on the Defense authorization bill.

#### NOMINATIONS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, today the Senate will consider yet another qualified nominee to be a DC Circuit Court

of Appeals judge, considered by many to be the second highest court in all the land.

It is troubling that Senate Republicans, for the fourth time this year, appear poised to reject an exceedingly capable nominee to this court for blatantly political reasons. Republicans have blocked three highly qualified female DC Circuit nominees in a row: Caitlin Halligan, Patricia Millett, and Nina Pillard. Today they are expected to block confirmation of District Judge Robert Wilkins, an extremely competent and experienced nominee and one who has bipartisan support. I say that because no one has questioned his qualifications or abilities; likewise, no Senator objected to the qualifications of Ms. Halligan, Ms. Millett or Ms. Pillard. Instead, Republicans have blocked these nominees solely to deny President Obama his constitutional right to appoint judges.

In years passed, my Republican colleagues agreed to block judicial nominees only in "extraordinary circumstances." These are their words, not mine.

In 2005, the senior Senator from South Carolina LINDSEY GRAHAM defined extraordinary circumstances for the benefit of this body. Being a highly qualified trial lawyer, I think he is qualified to respond and set this definition that we all agreed with. Here is what he said:

Ideological attacks are not an "extraordinary circumstance." To me, it would have to be a character problem, an ethics problem, some allegation about the qualifications of a person, not an ideological bent.

No Senator—I repeat, no Senator—has questioned the character, ethics, or qualifications of these three women that have already been rejected for the DC Circuit. No one has questioned the character, ethics or qualifications of Judge Wilkins. So I am frustrated that Republicans would once again filibuster such a highly qualified nominee—a nominee so highly qualified, in fact, that he was confirmed 3 years ago by voice vote to become a district court judge.

Judge Wilkins is an Indiana native who graduated cum laude with a degree in chemical engineering, and then he got a law degree from Harvard Law School. He has worked as a staff attorney for the DC Public Defender Service. He was a partner specializing in white-collar defense, intellectual property, and complex civil litigation at the private law firm of Venable. That is an outstanding law firm with lawyers all over the country.

Judge Wilkins also helped shine a national spotlight on national profiling when he brought a landmark lawsuit against the Maryland State Police in 1992 after he and three family members were stopped and searched. Why? Because they were African Americans. It is landmark litigation.

This nominee has a bright legal mind and a remarkable dedication to the rule of law. Under normal cir-

cumstances, such as the circumstances of his 2010 confirmation, he would be quickly confirmed, but now he faces a Republican filibuster. Unfortunately, the type of Republican obstruction we face today has become quite commonplace. President Obama's circuit court nominees, including nominees for the vital DC Circuit, have waited seven times longer than those nominated by President Bush.

Republicans claim they are blocking nominees to this crucial court because the court is underworked and doesn't need to fill its complement of judges. Republicans also claim that filling these three vacancies would amount to court packing. That is absurd on its face. My Republican colleagues were happy to confirm four Bush nominees to this court. In fact, 15 of the last 19 to the DC Circuit were appointed by Republican presidents. Appointing judges to fill vacant judicial seats is not court packing, it is the President's right as well as his duty.

I do not ask Republican Senators to support President Obama's nominees or even that they vote for them, but it is right and proper that they should give President Obama's nominees the same fair consideration afforded the nominees that came before them.

#### RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

Would the Chair announce the business of the day.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

#### MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 5 p.m. with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The Senator from Oklahoma.

#### ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that my 10 minutes might be extended by about 10 more minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### THANKS TO THE MAJORITY LEADER

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, let me start off, before the leader leaves the floor—and I was hoping to do this before the Chaplain of the Senate, Dr. Barry Black, left. I had a horrible loss eight days ago, losing a son. It was so touching to me—and I thank Barry Black, who included a good bit of some things about my son and about me in his opening prayer. Also, the comments that were made, the very gentle comments, and very helpful, that were made by the majority leader. So, through the Chair, I wish to thank HARRY REID very much for the comments he made.